

Who will be king?

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[0 : 0 0] the true king. So please help us and meet with us as you promise in our time together. We pray in Jesus name. Amen. So let's look together for the last time at Judges chapter 8. Judges chapter 8 and we'll close up the story of Gideon. So that's verse 22 to verse 35. So let's hear God's word together. The Israelites said to Gideon, rule over us, you, your son and your grandson, because you have saved us from the hand of Midian. But Gideon told them, I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The Lord will rule over you. And he said, I do have one request, that each of you give me an earring from your share of the plunder. It was a custom of the Ishmaelites to wear gold earrings. They answered, we'll be glad to give them. So they spread out a garment and each of them threw a ring from his plunder onto it. The weight of the gold rings he asked for came to 1700 shekels, not counting the ornaments, the pendants and the purple garments worn by the kings of Midian or the chains that were on the camel's necks. Gideon made the gold into an ephod, which he placed in Ophrah, his town. All Israel prostituted themselves by worshipping it there. And it became a snare to Gideon and his family. Thus, Midian was subdued before the Israelites and did not raise his head again. During Gideon's lifetime, the land had peace for 40 years.

Jerob Baal, son of Joash, went back home to live. He had 70 sons of his own, for he had many wives. His concubine, who lived in Shechem, also bore him a son, whom he named Abimelech. Gideon, son of Joash, died at a good old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

No sooner had Gideon died than the Israelites again prostituted themselves to the Baals. They set up Baal-barith as their god and did not remember the Lord their god who had rescued them from the hands of all their enemies on every side. They also failed to show any loyalty to the family of Jerob Baal, that is Gideon, in spite of all the good things he had done for them. Now our question, who will be king? But before we get there, we need to think about Gideon's story, the journey that he goes on.

I read an article this week entitled, To Survive Rapid Success, Remember to Slow Down. It was a business article, the advice of a chap called Garrett Late, who runs a highly successful sunglasses firm, one of those firms that, as it were, took off overnight. And because of the success, sort of based on the west coast of America, he very quickly aimed to expand the business, aimed for national expansion. But as he said, his confidence became a liability. He chose to target a particular site and invested a lot of money in this new location. And the expansion failed and failed miserably. And shops had to close and people had to be laid off. With the result that, he had to return to the drawing board, to restructure his business. And the lesson that he learned was to slow down and to reflect, to avoid confidence becoming a liability.

Well, we're coming to the end of Gideon's story. And we think of Gideon and he could be viewed as, certainly in human terms, an overnight success. Chapter six, when we first meet him, he is, in his own eyes, the least in his tribe. And his tribe is the least in Israel. But God chooses him and he does that on purpose for his own glory. And very quickly, Gideon is leading the nation of Israel in this dramatic victory and battle over their enemies, with just 300 men defeating the huge army of Midian.

[4 : 18] But it doesn't seem like there's any slowing down. There's no reflection. Rather, we can see that the success begins to go to his head. And there's a lack of worship in giving God his glory, as we saw last week. And his self-confidence and his desire for kingship, in the end, leaves a sad legacy in his story. It's hard to finish well. I want us to notice, as we get into our text tonight, that Gideon is tempted. And Gideon is tempted by the people to claim kingship. So in verses 22 to 27, we see Gideon tempted to claim kingship. When does this happen? Verse 22, Israel said to Gideon, rule over us, you, your son, your grandson, because you've saved us from the hand of Midian. So this is fresh from national victory. So remember, seven years of oppression under sort of the Midianites. Now they've been set free. And this delegation comes. It seems like all Israel is being represented, saying to Gideon, you and your family rule as king. And we want to set up a national dynasty. And Gideon, you're going to be the head.

Why? Why, Gideon? And why now? Well, the problem is seen in the language of verse 22, because you have saved us. Now, clearly, as we've seen in the last two chapters, all the reality points to the fact that God has saved them. God has deliberately weakened the army such that it felt like no other conclusion could be drawn other than God has given them success. But here, the people have managed to forget and ignore God, and they've elevated Gideon. And so here, Gideon is being confronted with the oldest temptation in the world to dethrone God, to remove God from his rightful throne and to put himself there. I say it's the oldest temptation in the world because we see it all the way back in the Garden of Eden, don't we? After all the amazing privileges of Genesis 1 and 2, here are Adam and Eve, the high point of creation made in the image and likeness of God made to rule, given this wonderful garden, given one another in marriage, stewarding creation for God, living under God's good rule, enjoying peace and perfection.

But Adam and Eve, they fall into sin, and they fall into sin because of pride. They reject God's word because they are drawn to the idea of becoming like God. Never mind the fact that as people, we're made in the image of God. They wanted to be God-like. They wanted to remove God as king and to take that place for themselves. And here, what's happening is the people have totally ignored the rich privilege they have that God is their redeemer king. He has rescued them and he is ruling for them.

He's made promises to them. That's rejected by the people because they want a king like the nations. And that's where Gideon's going to be tempted. It's a story that we see repeated in 1 Samuel 8.

When Samuel is old, the people come and say, we want a king like the nations. We want a figurehead. We want someone who we can see to lead us into battle. And the people in Gideon's day say, well, look, he's a dramatic success. Let's make him king. So Gideon is being tempted to claim kingship.

[7 : 58] And sadly, what we see in his life is that he's guilty of saying one thing but doing another. Because you look at verse 23, and it sounds really promising, doesn't it?

Gideon told them, I will not rule over you, nor will my son, the Lord, will rule over you. So he appears to reject the offer because God rules. But notice, he doesn't correct the people.

He doesn't make it abundantly clear, I didn't save you, God saved you. We can at the very least suggest that the seed of pride has begun to take root. But certainly, by the time we get to verse 24 onward, we see him acting as if he is the king.

He said, in his words, no thank you, but in his practice, yes, please. First thing he does, verse 24, I have one request. Give me an earring from your share of the plunder.

He claims the spoils of war. And this isn't a small token gesture. This is royal treasure. We discover that it's about 20 kilograms worth of gold.

[9 : 01] This is serious. And then he goes further. And he establishes, off his own back, an alternative worship centre.

That's the point of this ephod that he makes. That people will now come to Gideon and to Gideon's town to come for worship and to come for wisdom.

His story is very different to King David's. When God chooses David and anoints David and David eventually becomes king and he becomes king and he goes to reign in Jerusalem, what David wants to do is he wants to bring the ark of God to Jerusalem so that David's rule is seen to be under God's rule and that they are connected, but so that the focus is on the worship and the glory of God.

And Gideon is detracting from God's glory and taking to himself. We see him further acting as a king in verse 30.

He had 70 sons of his own, but he had many wives. He matches the practice of foreign kings, having many wives, having a harem for himself. And to make sure there were not any doubt, verse 31, He has one particular son whom he named Abimelech.

[10 : 19] And Abimelech means my father is king. So here is Gideon saying no, but acting as if he is a king. At the end of the book of Judges, Judges 21-25, we get a summary of the period in which we read, In those days Israel had no king.

Everyone did as they saw fit. And that's really interesting because the author, in a sense, is saying kingship is a good thing and he's preparing for kingship, but only if it is God's king.

Back in the book of Deuteronomy, there was instructions for the king at a time when they didn't have a king. So Deuteronomy 17, 14-17, we get some important qualifications.

Most important, God must appoint the king. That doesn't happen here. That king must not take many wives. Gideon fails that test. And he must not accumulate large amounts of gold and silver.

And Gideon fails that test also. Gideon has not chosen as king and he doesn't abide by the rules that God sets. And this little section gives us a window into the spiritual state of Israel at the time.

[11 : 33] As a nation, verse 27, Gideon made the gold into an ephod, which he placed in Ulfraith's town. All Israel prostituted themselves by worshipping it there. The judge who's supposed to lead the people towards faithfulness, towards God, led them away from God into unfaithfulness, spiritual adultery.

They want a God they can see. And his family. We discovered in verse 27, this same ephod became a snare to Gideon and his family.

They have seen God's grace. They've seen God's deliverance. But Gideon and his family, they're not gripped by that grace. There's a gap between what they know in their head and what they know in their heart.

And what we see is them robbing and diverting glory and honour from God and taking it to themselves. We know the phrase power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

And we see that destructive influence of power and authority in Gideon's story. So, before we move to the next section, let's examine how Gideon falls into that trap.

[12 : 48] To examine ourselves and to guard our own hearts. Really easy to throw stones at Gideon. But let's be careful to humbly approach this part of God's word. One thing we need to recognise is Gideon wanted more than God gave him.

Gideon had been called to be a judge. His task was to deliver the nation in the power and with the help of the Holy Spirit. That was no small task. But Gideon, he wanted more.

He wanted kingship. He wanted people to come to him for guidance and not the tabernacle. And do we see the danger? If we are not content with God's providence and God's calling and God's position he gives us in our life.

Then we can act against God's design. If there is a pride that elevates ourselves. If there is a longing for human recognition, the approval of others.

Then there is a constant danger that we too will want more than God gives us. And so we need to pursue that humility and that dependence and that willing to receive our circumstances from God's hands.

[14 : 05] We see, secondly, Gideon robbed God of glory. I think we can say that Gideon believed his own hype. There is, of course, a particular danger, particular temptation for those in positions of leadership.

And that includes in the church. Gideon did well when he said, I won't rule because the Lord rules. But then after that, he acted as if really did.

We need to be able to say the Lord rules full stop. It's the Lord who gives every gift. So we don't take credit for ourselves, but we make sure people are looking to God.

That God is the one who deserves praise and glory full stop. It requires wisdom, humility. Gideon, what do we see in him?

We see that he falls victim to the sin of pride. We see a progression in his story where at first he almost can't believe that God would choose to work through someone like him.

[15 : 10] And we see him with absolute dependence and absolute faith. But as success comes, we see self-reliance kick in and we see less and less of the honour of God.

And so it's a reminder that we cannot become complacent. We must guard our hearts. We must aim for gospel humility.

To see that all that we have and all that we are is from God's grace to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. We see that Gideon, along with the nation, fell victim to the sin of idolatry.

I find the way Dick Lucas, a preacher from, I guess, sort of significant latter half of the 20th century in London, the way he talks about idolatry.

He says, you know, anything that we look to for identity, for salvation, for comfort and security, can become an idol for Gideon. Power had begun to define him.

[16 : 23] That was the pool of the idol. Importance. I will be somebody because I have this role and responsibility.

Now, that might not be our thing. That might not be our idolatry. But there will be idols in our heart. Something that we think, if I just had this thing, if I have more of this thing, then I will be someone.

When times get hard, I'm going to look to this person or this truth to be my saviour. I draw my comfort and my sense of security from my bank balance, my relationship, my career, whatever it might be.

And the answer, again, is to see who we are in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our identity comes from knowing God is our Father. Who am I? I'm a child of God if our faith is in Jesus. Our salvation doesn't come from stuff. Our salvation comes from the Lord Jesus, who came to be our Redeemer.

[17 : 32] And where does our comfort and security come from? It comes from the Spirit who unites us to Christ, who reminds us we're children of God, who comes to be another comforter to live in our hearts.

The story of Gideon reminds us Gideon is not the Redeemer king and the people of God we're looking for. He claimed the status implicitly, but it belonged to God.

People of God need to wait until the coming of Jesus, where the true Redeemer king we all need is introduced.

He is the one who will break the power of sin, who will die on the cross for our pride, for our idolatry, for our robbing God of glory.

He is the one who through faith in Jesus gives true peace, gives true rest in the kingdom of God. So as we read the story of Gideon, we want to think about how it points us to the wonderful work of the Lord Jesus, the true king.

[18 : 43] So Gideon is tempted to claim kingship. And because of that, the second thing I want us to see is that Gideon leaves a sad legacy.

Verses 28 to 35, we'll see that. So the reality, and we recognise this, for better or for worse, as it goes for the king, so it goes for the people. We see that in so much of Old Testament history.

But we recognise that in our own experience, the influence of a leader, the influence of a head can be massive. We think about that politically, think about it in an organisation or a business or a school.

Think about it in a family. Leaders have that shaping influence and impact on others. And so it's really important for us, whether our influence is great or small, it's really important for us to think about legacy.

What is it that I'm going to leave behind? What do I want most for my kids and my grandkids, really and truly? What kind of business am I creating? What lasting impact on a community or an extended family do I wish to have?

[19 : 59] For Gideon, he was called to be a judge, but he wanted to be a king. And he leaves a sad legacy in his family and in his nation.

Verse 28 starts on a positive note. Thus Midian was subdued before the Israelites and did not raise its head again. During Gideon's lifetime, the land had peace for 40 years.

So despite Gideon's failings, and the Bible is honest, they don't try to cover over those failings, he did establish 40 years of peace that God, in grace and mercy, worked through him.

But a correction takes place. It says Midian was subdued. Midian was not subdued by Gideon. Midian was subdued by God.

God is the actor and the author is taking glory back to God, the one who deserves it. So it begins well, but we see again Gideon acting like the kings of the nation.

[21 : 02] So we saw that he took many wives. We saw that earlier. And then verse 31, there's this concubine who lived in Shechem. Shechem is in Canaan. So he's taking many wives, including those from Canaan.

That is forbidden in God's law. We've seen that he named his son Abimelech. My father is king. And what happens when Gideon dies?

We see that the peace and the well-being hitting the nation only goes skin deep. And immediately there's a downward spiral. No sooner had Gideon died than the Israelites again prostituted themselves to the Baals.

There's a national falling away from God to worship idols. And especially this idol called Baal, Barith. And there's a particular tragedy here. The word Barith means covenant.

So no longer are they worshipping and following and loving and serving the God of the covenant, the God who had committed himself to them, to their rescue and deliverance. They've exchanged the one true God for the Baal of the covenant.

[22 : 11] Verse 34, sad indictment. They did not remember the Lord their God, who had rescued them from the hands of all their enemies on every side. They are guilty of what we can call practical atheism.

They're ignoring God in his world. They're ignoring their saviour God and his rescue. They're ignoring the word of God, the promises of God.

They're living as practical atheists. It's the national legacy, family legacy. It's also tragic. We've got this guy, Abimelech.

He becomes the focus in chapter 9. The one who said, my father is king in chapter 9. And what we see him do is he slaughters his 70 brothers.

Seems like the seed of pride, that desire for kingship we recognise. And Gideon's life is now full blown in the sun. And so we've got this brutal power grab where he kills off all potential opposition.

[23 : 14] To think about his legacy in a wider context still. In verse 28 we're told the land had peace until Gideon died.

This is the last time in the book of Judges the land has peace and rest. And there is this judges cycle. There's a cycle. But there's also a downward spiral of the people turning away from God.

Of God bringing judgment in the form of nations oppressing, opposing. The people cry out, God sends judges. But at the same time God answers and sends the judge.

But there's still a downward spiral. There's a continued falling away from God. And we see failures of God's judges again and again and again.

And it's preparing the hearts of the people to long for God's chosen king. We'll see that in part with King David and with Solomon.

[24 : 10] But ultimately preparing our hearts for King Jesus. Now we can't leave this part of the Gideon story without some needed notes of caution. A good time for us to slow down, to reflect the direction of our lives.

The kind of legacy that we are establishing. Think about our own faith. Think about our family. Think about our workplace. So let's first of all consider.

Consider the pattern you're setting. Consider the legacy you're setting. We speak especially to those listening who are in Christian families.

Now while we recognise, don't we, that we cannot guarantee faith in children. It's not a case of take our kids to church and read the Bible and pray with them. And that guarantees they'll come to faith. But we must be faithful in doing our part.

We can't light the fire but we can set the kindling. As is often said. So we must, as parents and as grandparents, when we have the opportunity, teach our kids the Bible and the Gospel.

[25 : 16] Train them in the way of faith and obedience. Pray for them. Model Christian faith to them. And show them and show them and show them again.

And the good news that's found in them. Jesus as the saviour they need. The saviour for sinners. So consider the pattern we're setting.

Especially, I think, as Christian families in our homes. Maybe the summer holidays when there's less routine. Maybe it's the time to start a new routine of making time for family worship.

Of taking, even if it's just a few minutes, to read a part of the Bible. To talk about it together. To pray it together with and for one another.

Perhaps even to sing together. To build our family life on Jesus and his word. So consider that pattern.

[26 : 15] Secondly, show sin no mercy. Jesus talked about just a little bit of leaven. Going through a whole lump of dough and causing it to rise.

A little sin can have a huge impact. We see it in Gideon. It's that sort of the little drop of pride. And several lives begins to spread until he's grabbing for kingship.

So we need to show sin no mercy. As John Owen said, be killing sin or it will be killing you. Another caution we need to sound is this one.

Make sure that our faith is personal and not simply superficial. And I think that's especially a warning if we're sort of brought up in Christian families.

We've got a Christian background. Is it the faith of my family or is it my faith? Many of us, we grew up in churches.

[27 : 17] We're happy to affirm, yes, Jesus is the son of God. Jesus is the saviour. He died on the cross and he rose again. But is Jesus my saviour? Is he your saviour?

Did he die to pay for my sin? There's eternity of a difference between just knowing it and knowing it personally. Make sure our faith is personal and not superficial.

And another caution is never forget God's saving grace. What we see from the people is that failure to remember our forgetfulness, a complacency that led them so quickly to idolatry and towards national disaster.

So we must keep our eyes on Jesus. We must be preaching the gospel to ourselves every day to remind ourselves that we are sinners saved by grace, that we're loved and accepted in Christ, that we have the spirit in us, that we have this new identity, we have this new calling to live holy lives, to represent God in the world with the strength that he provides.

We have the hope of heaven. We have the hope of the new heavens and the new earth to look forward to. And all of it is a gift from God. And it all comes through Jesus.

[28 : 38] We never want to forget Jesus. And so I think when we think about this story of Gideon, with so many of the Bible characters, Gideon makes our heart long for Jesus.

As we leave Gideon's story, we must see how Jesus succeeds where Gideon fails. But Jesus is the true king we all need.

We know that because Jesus is the king who always gave glory to God. So I read at the beginning from Luke chapter 4, it is temptation. We hear Jesus give glory to his father, tempted with all the authority and splendour of the nations.

If he would just worship the devil, go his way. Jesus said, worship the Lord your God and serve him all the way. Jesus consistently announced that he only said and did what the father gave him to do, that he was so concerned for the father's glory.

And that climax is in his obedience. And in going to the cross, and there at the cross we see this glorious plan of God's salvation worked out.

[29 : 56] And all of that because Jesus was willing to humble himself, to take on the form of a servant by becoming one of us and becoming obedient to the point of death on the cross.

And it's because of that that God highly exalted him and gave him the name that's above every name. So Jesus is the king who always gave glory to God. Jesus is the king who leads us in true worship.

Jesus is our worship leader. He reveals to us the glory of the father. He sends us the spirit so that we can worship in spirit and in truth.

We see in Jesus the pattern of a true worshipper. Loved God's word, lived by God's word, loved spending time alone with his father, loved meeting with his people to be in the presence of God.

Jesus is the king who leads us in true worship. Jesus is the king who serves. Unlike Gideon, who was all about grabbing that money and position for himself, Jesus didn't come to gain wealth and comfort.

[30 : 58] He came to serve. Not to be served. He came to give his life as a ransom for many. Jesus. Jesus is the king who brings not just temporary rest for a few years.

Jesus brings rest and peace in our hearts. Peace with God. Freedom from the fear of condemnation, of guilt, of that fear of death.

Rest, knowing that we belong to God. Not just for now, but for all eternity. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. And Jesus alone is the king you and I need.

Let's pray together now. Lord God, as we read your word with hearts that are open, we recognise in Gideon so much of ourselves.

We see the temptation towards pride and towards setting up idols in our hearts. Our desire for the approval of others.

[32 : 12] To live like the people around us rather than following your ways. Lord, we pray that you would cause us to repent.

Cause us to return in our hearts to you, to love you. Lord, we also pray that you'd help us to think about the legacy that we want to leave.

That by your grace, that we would leave a legacy that points people towards Jesus and his glory.

That in our families and in our work situations and in our communities, that people would be drawn to Jesus as Saviour through us.

Lord, help us to keep looking away from ourselves and looking to him. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. Now we'll close singing together.

[33 : 18] Behold our God. And then the first ten verses of Psalm 96. Who has held the oceans in his hands?

Who has numbered every grain of salt? Kings and nations tremble at his voice.

Oh, creation rises to rejoice. Behold our God.

Seize it on his throne. Come let us adore him. Behold our King.

Nothing can compare. Come let us adore him. Who has given counsel to the Lord?

[34 : 53] Who can question any of his words? Who can teach the one who knows all things?

Who can fathom all his wondrous deeds? Behold our God. Behold our God.

Seated on his throne. Seated on his throne. Come let us adore him. Behold our King. Behold our King.

Nothing can compare. Come let us adore him. Come let us adore him.

God. Amen. Amen. God.

[35 : 56] Who has felt the nails upon his hands? Bearing all the guilt of sin for me God eternal, humbled to the grave Jesus, Savior, risen well to reign Behold our God, seated on His throne Come let us adore Him Behold our King Nothing can compare Come let us adore Him O sing a new song to the Lord

Sing praises to His name And His salvation day by day Let all the earth proclaim His glory and His mighty deeds To every land declare How great and awesome is the Lord With Him no gods compare For other gods are wood and stone The Lord made heaven's height All power and majesty are His He dwells in glorious light All nations to the Lord

Ascribe the glory that is due Glory and strength ascribe to God And praise His name on you Enter His courts with joy And bring an offering with you Worship the Lord in holy fear All earth before Him bow Tell every land the Lord is King Established as the earth And cannot move The Lord will judge The peoples in His truth

Lord porn Indeed Give Him Thanks for coming He watching watching Get familiar Go